

**Book review: Elspeth Guild & Sandra Mantu (ed.)
Constructing and imagining labour migration:
perspectives of control from five continents**

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**Elspeth Guild & Sandra Mantu (ed.) *Constructing and Imagining Labour Migration. Perspectives of Control from Five Continents*,
Surrey: Ashgate, 2011, 311 pages, ISBN 978-1-4094-0963-2**

Review by Dan APĂTEANU

Traditional research on migration evaluated issues as its factors, the determinants of state policies and their effectiveness; the book *Constructing and Imagining Labour Migration* goes beyond the national outlook at a global and comparative perspective based on studies in five continents. Its purpose is to make a reassessment of the interaction between states regarding labour migration and shifting paradigms of control regarding movement of persons.

Migration is an important political issue that is challenging the view of states as sovereign over a clearly defined territory and population as the states want to control these movements across borders. The concepts of construction and imagination of labour migration control are used to avoid former meanings of different types of migration. Their purpose is to examine states claims of control, its need, effectiveness and purposes on an empirical base, in the interaction between states and individuals.

The concept of labour migration control should be enlarged, beyond external or internal controls, to include the phenomena like illegality and deportability. There's a growing emphasis on the disciplining of migrants via social control. However, it is important that we should clarify what is the capacity of the state to assign the status of „illegal”, and the results of the interaction between the policies of states that tightly control migration and those with a light control.

Also, in the relationship with the state, the individual must be viewed not only as an object, but also as an actor, because there is a dynamic and ongoing process of status determination, after one has crossed the border, which depends on the status relationship between the country of origin and the country of destination. Labour migration as a term assumes a particular relationship between

the migrant and the economic system, which is still one with a certain image of the individual as being in a subordinate position, exemplified by the distinction between the term of worker and of employee. There are gaps between laws and policies, on one hand, and their political implementation and enforcement, on the other hand, gaps that depend on the resources that a state has at its disposal and its willingness to implement the laws.

The book is organised in three parts; the first deals with the issue of uncertain borders and empty control claims in labour migration regimes with weak control claims; the second one tackles the appearance of control, examining labour migration regimes with high control claims and the third one examines equivocal claims, examining labour migration regimes with ambivalent control claims. Each section comprises a number of articles on its specific theme.

The first section is entitled *Uncertain Borders, Empty Control Claims: Labour Migration Regimes with Weak Control Claims*. The first chapter deals with the „failure” of laws and state controls to regulate labour migration for Basotho domestic workers in South Africa. The second chapter studies Bolivian migrants in Brazil in the context of processes of zoning, showing that there’s a gap between legal improvement of status and integration. The third chapter analyzes labour migration in Malaysia and proposes the theory of high numbers, low rights, through the relationship between the job qualification of the migrants, their rights and the democratic status of the country. The fourth chapter, presents labour migration policies and practices in several East Asian states, especially in Taiwan, country which in the framework of its policy and goals, has succeeded in preventing the settlement of migrant workers, but restricting them to harsh working conditions and living experiences. The fifth chapter considers the impact of irregular migrants and refugees from Zimbabwe in South Africa, against the backdrop of public immigration policy limitations.

The second section is *The Appearance of Control: Examining Labour Migration Regimes with High Control Claims*. The first chapter of this section regards the Canadian claims of migration control; the increasing number of temporary migrants and their problematic social inclusion, shows there’s a weakness of the points-based system and a need for the improvement of social justice. The next chapter evaluates labour migration controls towards third country nationals in European Union, suggesting that the position of individual migrant workers is weak due to the fragmented and inefficient European labour migration

regulations. The third chapter is about labour migration in Australia, a country that due to historic premises had largely viewed migrants as permanent inhabitants; the author shows there has been a shifting paradigm of control based on visas and a combination of free migration and arranged schemas. The fourth chapter in this part describes labour migration policy in Japan and the interplay between labour control claims and human rights claims.

The final section is named *Equivocal Claims: Examining Labour Migration Regimes with Ambivalent Control Claims*. Its first chapter tackles claims on labour migration regimes in the European Union showing that the free movement of workers did not lead to a reduction of social solidarity or a rise in xenophobia, while the next chapter considers European citizenship as a possible direction to give away control on labour migration by states. The third chapter deals with Mexico – US labour relations based on the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and the period after the terrorist attack in 2001, showing that there has been a continuing problem with the illegal border crossings and an increasing of the Mexican diaspora in US. The fourth chapter of the section analyzes labour migration in the Central Asian region concluding that the area labour migration dynamics are still changing and it is influenced by political and socio-economic factors alike. The final chapter debates the control mechanisms in EU, arguing for the continuation of the free movement policy and for a labour migration policy that leads to socio-economic status improvements.

Constructing and Imagining Labour Migration provides useful insights in the academic debate of the labour migration issue, offering a paradigm shifting approach of a theme that is on the political agenda in many countries. Its comparative and interdisciplinary studies generate well documented approaches of the labour migration issue. Hence, the book is useful for experts, researchers, policy decision makers that work on labour migration.